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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000082

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TAGS: NATO PREL AF

SUBJECT: NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL READOUT FEBRUARY 7, 2007

Classified By: Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Richard Olson,  
for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

**1. (C) SUMMARY:**

-- Afghanistan: Departing COMISAF LTG Richards highlighted NATO accomplishments and remaining challenges, including: continued force shortfall, the need for reconstruction, development and governance to keep pace with Afghan expectations, and the importance of driving a wedge between the Taliban and the population. He noted sustained downturns in violence in the south and east and detailed ISAF plans for a spring &campaign8 (vice &offensive8). He urged private versus public pressure on Pakistani President Musharraf and proposed a &Joint Policy Action Group8 to improve NATO-Afghan-Pakistani policy cooperation. Italian Ambassador Moreno reiterated his government's commitment to Afghanistan and indirectly complained about a recent op-ed in Italian press by a group of NATO Ambassadors on Italy's Afghanistan policy, but without mentioning any names or specifics.

-- Kosovo: SYG will travel to Belgrade and Pristina on 15 February with message of international unity; CMC to provide NAC briefing on prudent military planning in the context of Ahtisaari's proposal. Ambassador Nuland briefed PermReps on Ambassador Wisner's Feb. 5-6 meetings in Pristina and Belgrade.

-- Iraq: SHAPE recommends second scoping mission on gendarmerie training; SYG concurs and will seek NAC approval.

-- Darfur: NATO continues to stand by on Darfur, Somalia; unclear whether African Union (AU) PSC Chairman Djinnit will address the NAC in February.

-- AFRICOM: Ambassador Nuland informed PermReps of President Bush's announcement on the creation of AFRICOM.

END SUMMARY.

Afghanistan

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¶2. (C) In a congenial yet blunt session with the NAC, ISAF IX Commander LTG Richards looked back at his nine months in command, providing general comments on accomplishments and remaining challenges. Richards praised the men and women of NATO deployed to Afghanistan under his command, telling Ambassadors & your Alliance has done pretty well.<sup>8</sup> On troops, he told the NAC frankly that given shortfalls, he had to rely more on airpower, which results in more civilian (and friendly force) casualties. He noted as an accomplishment sustained downward trends in violence in RC-South and RC-East, citing ISAF success and dismissing as &rubbish<sup>8</sup> analysis attributing the trend ) which dates to the initial August 2006 spike caused by Operation Medusa ) to a winter lull. Richards praised the Policy Action Group in Kabul as a mechanism he created to bring synergy to reconstruction, development, and security activities in-country, and to bring coherence and accountability to the Karzai government. On Pakistan, Richards said that while President Musharraf does not support the Taliban, he is not yet delivering fully on his intentions; private pressure is better than public pressure, which Musharraf is beginning to resent. He cited the need for reconstruction and development and increases in governance capacity to keep up with rising expectations of the Afghan people as an equal, if not greater challenge to ISAF than Pakistan border issues. Finally, he pointed to &Operation Now Ruz<sup>8</sup> (New Year), ISAF's new operation planned to be a broad-based spring campaign (distinguishing between &campaign<sup>8</sup> with its positive connotations, and &offensive<sup>8</sup> with its negative ones) to provide the security for enhanced reconstruction, development and governance.

¶3. (C) Some specific issues Richards addressed included:

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-- CERP funds: Richards praised both U.S. funding of programs to bring quick aid to areas that suffer battle damage, and the ability of U.S. forces to use it well; &all nations needed this dynamism and tempo.<sup>8</sup>

-- Governance: &Poor governance is the Taliban,s recruiting sergeant.<sup>8</sup> The situation is improving, but Karzai still governs &like a tribal elder with a cell phone<sup>8</sup> and people are beginning to become impatient.

-- Counter-narcotics: Richards drew a distinction between eradication, which was being done, and &fighting narco-warriors<sup>8</sup> to which insufficient attention was being paid. ISAF as presently structured cannot contain the second and third )order security consequences.

-- Taliban: Not all are irreconcilable, he said, and we need to drive a wedge between the hard core supporters, and those who collaborated for pecuniary motives.

-- Musa Qala: Richards said the Musa Qala agreement was an attempt to drive such a wedge, and while it had enabled the elders to stand up to the Taliban, he noted it was presently in a state of flux ) neither black nor white, but shades of gray.

-- Pakistan-Afghanistan relations: Richards cited the lack of a mechanism for the governments to come together as a real impediment, suggesting a &Joint PAG,<sup>8</sup> or similar political equivalent to the Tripartite Commission.

¶4. (C) Ambassador Nuland praised LTG Richards for a successful tenure as COMISAF during which he oversaw both the geographical and philosophical expansion of ISAF into NATO,s first-ever joint, integrated combat mission involving ground forces. She commended the planning behind Operation Now Ruz, which reflected today,s priorities of going after enemy safe havens, while addressing border issues and the need for greater development and cooperation with Pakistan. She encouraged the public narrative at Seville to focus on the revised CJSOR not in terms of numbers, but in terms of ISAF

enhancing its mission and strengthening our operational posture. She asked Richards if COMISAF needed enhanced operational control over forces in theater (answer: yes, but nations will not give up their &red cards8), and whether ISAF is in position to hold onto the recent gains made in Panjwayi (answer: lack of sufficient Afghan security forces continues to be problematic.)

¶15. (C) Responding to questions from PermReps, Richards said the UN was "up to" doing what NATO wanted it to do, namely increase effectiveness in the provinces but that in most instances, the UN could not be blamed because the security situation prevented outreach. Richards said that PRT coordination was not a large issue, since he was confident that all were working toward goals laid out in ISAF's OPLAN. He hailed OEF support to ISAF, noting he had "nothing but praise."8 Concerning the possibility of another Operation Medusa, he assessed it as not likely, asserting that the Taliban had learned not to take on NATO in a direct, conventional fight.

¶16. (C) Following the Richards briefing, Italian Ambassador Moreno asked for the floor to reiterate that the Prodi government was committed to maintaining Italian commitments in Herat and Kabul, would maintain its lead on justice sector reform, and was looking to increase economic aid. In a carefully worded statement from Rome (that he shared with us privately beforehand), he urged that discussions about Italian commitments be conducted in diplomatic fora, and observed that the Italian public would regard public criticism as unwanted foreign interference. (Note: He did not mention Ambassador Spogli's Op-Ed.) The Romanian Ambassador responded to the Italian intervention by noting how much it valued Italian contributions to ISAF. Latvia

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announced a two million euro equipment donation for the ANA, and Ambassador Nuland urged NMAs to devise procedures for speeding up delivery of donated equipment to the ANA.

Kosovo

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¶17. (SBU) The SYG urged Allies to use the upcoming Defense Ministerial at Seville to discuss the way forward on NATO's role in post-status Kosovo. He reiterated the importance of international unity on Kosovo and said he intends to bring a message of international unity when he visits Pristina and Belgrade on February 15. The SYG noted this will be his first visit to Belgrade since the Riga decision on PfP for Serbia, and said he intends to convey to the Serbs his vision of Euro-Atlantic integration for the region. He requested that the CMC provide a briefing to the NAC at the end of February on ongoing prudent military planning in the context of UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari's recently released proposal. CMC responded affirmatively, noting that a good amount of planning had been done already and that the MC was preparing for a quick response following the adoption of any new UNSCR for Kosovo. Ambassador Nuland also briefed PermReps on Ambassador Wisner's Feb. 5-6 meetings in Pristina and Belgrade.

Darfur

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¶18. (SBU) The SYG said Darfur and Somalia are expected to dominate the UNSC's work program this month. One aim is to speed up the implementation of the three-phased approach to UN assistance to AMIS; however, Sudanese President Bashir continues to &prevaricate8 and impede implementation. The SYG reported the UN is considering taking over the AU's mission to Somalia at some point in the future, while noting AMISOM currently has a shortfall of 3,500 troops. The SYG said it remains unclear whether AU PSC Chairman Djinnit will be able to address the NAC in mid-February.

Iraq

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¶9. (SBU) CMC said that on February 2, the Military Committee endorsed SHAPE's recommendation for a further scoping mission on expansion of training in Iraq (i.e. gendarmerie training). This mission's report is scheduled to come to the MC and the NAC on March 15 for consideration. The SYG supported this action, stating that &even if the country has a real need, we require a more through analysis,<sup>8</sup> and intends to circulate a document endorsing this recommendation for NAC approval.

AFRICOM

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¶10. (U) Ambassador Nuland said that she would circulate to PermReps President Bush's announcement on the creation of a new regional military command for Africa (AFRICOM), which will become operational in 2008. She noted this will mean that CDR EUCOM (i.e., SACEUR in his US hat) will not have bilateral U.S. responsibilities for Africa in the future, enabling him to focus more on NATO issues.

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